FOREST ADMINISTRATION REPORT OF THE CENTRAL CIRCLE, BOMBAY PRESIDENCY, FOR THE FOREST YEAR 1896-97.

INTRODUCTION.

Famine, which has covered the face of the Deccan during the greater portion of the forest year, has imprinted its depressing stamp upon the commercial transactions of the Central Circle, so that the financial results have been very unfavourable compared with those of preceding years. The early rains in July were unusually heavy, and caused great and disastrous floods in the rivers flowing through the Deccan, but the subsequent lengthened cessation of rains, and the consequent drought, withered up the crops in the eastern portion of the circle; and as the prices of food-grains became very high, trade in timber and other forest produce languished for the want of money and demand; and whatever grass had sprung up under the early rains in the country east of the moist forest belt bordering the Syhádris was quickly eaten up by cattle, and what escaped died away under an absence of rain and humidity, so that there was an absolute dearth of grass in the Sholápur and Ahmednagar divisions, and in the eastern ranges of the Poona and Sátára divisions, and the inland ranges of Násik, by the middle of November 1896. The timber and firewood and bámboo sales have not in consequence of these adverse conditions been as successful as was expected before any sign of the famine appeared, and the revenue from grass, grazing and other minor forest produce shows a considerable decline.

2. No territorial changes of divisions have occurred; but owing to the Sávda Táluka with the Ráver and Yával Petás having been transformed into two tálukas, *viz.*, Ráver and Yával, the three forest ranges of Ráver, Sávda and Yával have followed suite, and are now represented by two larger ranges, Ráver and Yával, the Sávda táluka and range having disappeared from the lists of revenue sub-divisions, and of forest minor executive charges.

3. *Forest Reservations* have expanded to a small extent through some waste and occupied lands situated within the sanctioned forest boundary lines having been acquired and constituted reserved forests; the nominal forest acreage has increased slightly under corrections in book entries of areas. The net increase from both causes amounts to 14 square miles and 243 acres at the close of the year: on 30th June 1897, the forest reservations included in reserved forest 14 square miles 257 acres, in protected forests—14 acres, total 14 square miles 243 acres.

4. *Forest Settlements.*—Forest Settlement Officers were engaged in completing the records of the forest settlements, and also upon the acquisition of occupied lands inside the sanctioned forest boundaries, either by giving waste lands in exchange or by payment of money compensation; during the year the settlement of 9 square miles and 634 acres of such acquired lands has been effected; and 11 square miles and 158 acres of acquired lands were still undergoing settlement which had not been finished at the close of the year.

5. *Forest Privileges* remain in *statu quo*, having undergone no change.

6. *Forest Surveys* were in progress in the divisions of Ahmednagar and Poona; the total cost charged to the Circle amounts to Rs. 31,356.

7. *Forest Demarcation* was undertaken on a large scale in order to afford relief work to the people in the famine-affected parts of the Circle. 2,746 linear miles of forest boundaries have been demarcated with 65,881 special forest boundary marks at an expenditure of Rs. 16,917.

8. *Forest Working Plans.*—The Working Plans Party has demarcated on the ground 134 compartments including an area of 14,539 acres for the exploitation of timber. Proposals for the systematic working of the forests of 10 ranges have been completed during the year.

9. *Forest Establishments.*—There has been no change in the numerical strength and constitution of superior officers; 2 Forest guards on Rs. 7 each

have been added to the Forest District Establishment, and 1 clerk on Rs. 60, 1 on Rs. 40, 1 on Rs. 20 and 2 peons on Rs. 8 each to the office establishment.

10. *Forest Offences*, in respect of which prosecutions were instituted, and those that were compounded under Section 67 of the Indian Forest Act, have diminished slightly in number compared with those of the year before. 1,610 cases of forest crimes were brought before the Magistrates of the Deccan for disposal according to the law, and 2,091 cases were compounded by Divisional Forest Officers under Section 67 of the Indian Forest Act.

11. *Forest Impoundings.*—The number of animals pounded during the year has been considerably less than that of the previous year: the score amounted to 101,192 in "open-forests" for grazing without permits having been taken and paid for; and 138,770 for trespassing in "closed-forests" in which no grazing is allowed: of the total number impounded 81,413 were sheep and 36,934 were goats.

12. *Forest Fires.*—The percentage of areas burnt in all the divisions has been less than that of the preceding year notwithstanding the fact of the extreme dryness of the year, and of its consequently being a more favourable year for forest fires.

13. *Forest Development.*—The results of both the natural and artificial reproduction were not satisfactory owing to unfavorable rainfall, heavy deluges at the beginning of the season followed by a lengthened break, and subsequent great drought.

14. *Forest Finances.*—The revenue of the year has diminished greatly, while the expenditure shows a considerable increase, thus reducing the surplus: the particulars are explained further on in the financial chapter.

15. *Forest Officers.*—From the opening of the year, *i.e.*, the 1st July to the 24th November 1896, and again from the 8th to 30th June 1897, the Circle was in charge of the Honourable Mr. A. T. Shuttleworth, Conservator of Forests, 1st Grade, and during the interim Mr W. G. Betham, Deputy Conservator of Forests, 1st Grade, held administrative charge of the Circle in consequence of the deputation on special famine duty of Mr. Shuttleworth, in connection with the supply of grass and grazing to the cattle in the famine-affected districts. The names of the superior Forest officers, who held charge of the several divisions, &c., are given in the statement below :—

No.	Division.	Name.	Rank.	Designation.	From	To	Remarks.
1	East Khándesh ...	Mr. R. H. Mádan ..	Extra Deputy Conservator of Forests.	Divisional Forest Officer.	1st July 1896 ...	30th June 1897.	
2	West Khándesh	Mr. H. W. Keys ...	Deputy Conservator of Forests.	Do.	Do. ...	Do.	
		„ V. G. Tumne...	Extra Assistant Conservator of Forests.	Sub-division Forest Officer.	Do. ...	Do.	
3	Násik	Mr. C. Greatheed ..	Deputy Conservator of Forests.	Divisional Forest Officer.	Do. ...	18th Oct. 1896.	
		„ C. M. Thato ..	Deputy Collector	Do. ..	19th October 1896.	20th do.	
		„ G. R. Duxbury.	Assistant Conservator of Forests.	Do. ..	21st do.	30th June 1897.	
		„ G. S. Hinge ...	Extra Assistant Conservator of Forests.	Sub-division Forest Officer.	1st July 1896 ...	Do.	
4	Ahmednagar ...	Mr. S. Hornidge, A.M.I.C.E.	Deputy Conservator of Forests.	Divisional Forest Officer.	Do. ...	Do.	
5	Poona	Mr. R. S. Fagan ..	Do.	Do. ...	Do. ...	29th Nov. 1896.	
		„ L. S. Osmaston.	Do.	Do. ...	30th Nov. 1896 ...	30th June 1897.	
		„ E. M. Hodgson.	Assistant Conservator of Forests.	Supernumerary ...	19th do. ...	Do.	
		„ V. M. Tilak ..	Extra Assistant Conservator of Forests.	Sub-division Forest Officer.	1st July 1896 ...	Do.	
6	Sátára	Mr. A. D. Wilknis .	Deputy Conservator of Forests.	Divisional Forest Officer.	Do. ...	Do.	
		„ W. R. Govande.	Extra Assistant Conservator of Forests.	Sub-division Forest Officer.	Do. .	Do.	
7	Sholápur	Mr. W. F. D. Fisher.	Assistant Conservator of Forests.	Divisional Forest Officer.	Do. ...	Do.	
8	Working Plans, Central Circle.	Mr. T. B. Fry ...	Deputy Conservator of Forests.	Do. ..	Do. ...	29th Nov. 1896.	
		„ R. S. Fagan ...	Do.	Do. ..	30th Nov. 1896 ...	30th June 1897.	
		„ L. S. Osmaston.	Do.	Assistant to the Divisional Forest Officer, Working Plans.	1st July 1896 ...	27th Aug. 1896.	